Historical Stages of the City of Agadir Tlemcen Through Evidence from Its Military Architecture.

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الملخص:

تُعتبر مدينة تلمسان من المدن ذات الأهمية التاريخية والأثرية في منطقة المغرب الأوسط، حيث اختارها الأدارسة كمحطة أولى لهم قبل الانتقال إلى مدينة فاس. وقد لعبت دورًا محوريًا في تاريخ المنطقة، حيث احتضنت قبيلة بني عبد الواد الذين جعلوا منها عاصمة لدولتهم، ما أكسبها مكانة استراتيجية وسياسية بارزة، من الناحية العمرانية، تتميز تلمسان بتشكّلها من مجموعة من المدن التاريخية، من بينها أغادير وتقرارت، اللتان ساهمتا في تطور النسيج الحضري للمدينة. وقد برزت مدينة أغادير كواحدة من أقدم المدن في المغرب الأوسط، حيث شُيدت بين القرنين الثاني والثالث هجريًا، ما يجعلها من المعالم الهامة التي تستحق الدراسة والتوثيق.

ومن خلال بحثنا هذا، سنركز على دراسة مدينة أغادير، نظرًا لأهميتها التاريخية والمعمارية، حيث كانت تمثل نواة حضرية متقدمة تعكس نمط العمارة الإسلامية المبكرة في المنطقة. كما أنها لعبت دورًا أساسيًا في رسم معالم تلمسان كمدينة ذات طابع حضاري

متكامل، لذا فإن دراسة تطورها العمراني وبالأخص عمارتها العسكرية تساهم في فهم أعمق للامتداد التاريخي لتلمسان ودورها في تاريخ المغرب الأوسط.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مدينة أقادير؛ تلمسان؛ عمارة العسكرية؛ البوابات؛ أبراج.

Abstract:

Tlemcen is considered one of the cities of historical and archaeological importance in the central Maghreb region. The Idrisids chose it as their first stop before moving to the city of Fez. It played a pivotal role in the history of the region, as it embraced the Banu Abd al-Wad tribe, who made it the capital of their state, which gave it a prominent strategic and political position.

From an urban perspective, Tlemcen is characterized by its formation from a group of historical cities, including Agadir and Tagrart, which contributed to the development of the urban fabric of the city. The city of Agadir emerged as one of the oldest cities in the central Maghreb, as it was built between the second and third centuries AH, making it one of the important landmarks that deserve study and documentation, through our research, we will focus on studying the city of Agadir due to its historical and architectural significance. It represented an advanced urban nucleus reflecting the early Islamic architectural style in the region. It also played a fundamental role in shaping the features of Tlemcen as a city with an integrated urban character. Therefore, studying its urban development, especially its military architecture, contributes to a deeper understanding of the historical extension of Tlemcen and its role in the history of the central Maghreb.

Keywords: Agadir city; Tlemcen; Military architecture; Gates; Towers.

Introduction:

The city of Agadir stands as a pivotal urban nucleus, foundational to the development and evolution of Tlemcen broader urban landscape. Our study delves into the historical trajectory of Agadir, with a significant focus on its military architecture. The importance of this research lies in its ability to clarify and describe these architectural remnants, offering crucial insights into the city's growth and transformation over time, Agadir early establishment as an urban center makes its military structures invaluable historical documents. These fortifications, watchtowers, and defensive walls are not merely remnants of past conflicts; they are tangible markers of periods of expansion, consolidation, and strategic shifts. By meticulously examining their construction techniques, materials, and alterations, we can reconstruct a chronological understanding of Agadir evolution for instance, the presence of specific defensive features might indicate periods of heightened external threats, while changes in fortification styles could reflect advancements in military technology or shifts in ruling powers, this investigation seeks to address a central question: Can the developmental stages of Agadir be effectively traced and understood through its military installations? We hypothesize that the city's military architecture provides a robust framework for comprehending its historical development. Each layer of construction, every repair, and each strategic addition or modification to these defensive structures tells a story of the city's past, reflecting its political, economic, and social dynamics. By undertaking a comprehensive analysis of these often-overlooked yet profoundly significant architectural elements, we aim to shed new light on Agadir historical journey, positioning its military architecture as a primary source for understanding its urban progression.

1-Overview of the City of Agadir:

The name Agadir stands out as one of the most significant designations for Tlemcen during the medieval period. Its meaning, "the impregnable rock" (le rocher), characterized by a steep slope, likely refers to the city's elevated northern side. Alternatively, the name may originate from the Berber word agadir, which denotes a fortified citadel or a strong city wall (la citadelle).

Another perspective is offered by the writer Bargès, who suggests a Phoenician origin for the name Agadir. His argument is based on the presence of the word qadar in Hebrew, which he believes is identical to its Phoenician counterpart, both belonging to the Semitic language family. According to this interpretation, qadar would be equivalent to the Arabic expressions "old wall" and "fortified city," further reinforcing the idea that Agadir historically denoted a place of fortification and defense." (Nadjraoui, 2017-2018, p. 5)

The Agadir region is situated northeast of the city of Tlemcen, in a location lower in elevation compared to the Takrara area. Astronomically, it is located at latitude 34°53'20.99" North and longitude 1°18'21.0" West, with an elevation of approximately 590 meters above sea level.

The Agadir region is considered the initial nucleus of the city of Tlemcen, having been founded by the Banu Ifran of the Zenata Berbers in ancient times, making it one of the oldest settlements in the area. Agadir, along with its neighboring regions, served as a major center of settlement for the greater Zenata tribal confederation and its various branches, which played a significant role in shaping the political and social fabric of the region.

In addition to its historical importance, sources indicate that Agadir enjoyed a distinct strategic location, which made it a center for early economic and commercial activities. Furthermore, the remnants of fortifications and architectural remains found there today reflect its defensive character, strengthening the hypothesis that it was one of the primary settlement points that contributed to the development of Tlemcen as a major city in the central Maghreb.



Plan No. 01 shows the city of Agadir in the year 1836, (Défense, 1836)



Aerial Photograph No. 01 shows the location of Agadir in relation to the center of the city of Tlemcen,
(https://mapy.com/en/zakladni?x=15.6252330&y=49.8022514&z=8, s.d.)

2-The City of Agadir Through Geographical Sources:

Geographical sources dating back to the period between the 2nd and 5th centuries AH (6th-11th centuries AD) provide us with numerous urban details about the city. We will present and analyze these details, focusing on the military aspect of the city. Al-Ya'qubi is considered the first of these sources, mentioning the following in his text about the great and famous city in the west called Tlemcen: "It has a stone wall, and behind it another stone wall. It has a large population, palaces, and well-built houses inhabited by a man among them named Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Sulayman. Around this city are Berber people called Maknasa and Sarsara." (Ahmad ibn Abi Ya'qub, p. 196).

As for Ibn Hawqal, he states: "Tlemcen is an ancient city with flowing rivers, watermills along them, and fruits. It has a strong and impregnable brick wall, irrigated crops, abundant yields, and farmlands." (Hawqal, 1996, p. 89), Following him, Al-Bakri describes it as "(a walled city at the foot of a walnut tree mountain, with five gates, three of which are on the Qibla side: Bab al-Hammam, Bab Wahb, and Bab al-Khawkha; in the east is Bab al-'Aqaba, and in the west is Bab Abi Qurra...) (al-Bakri).

This text, derived from geographical sources dating between the 2nd and 5th centuries AH (6th-11th centuries AD), provides valuable insights into the urban fabric of the city of Tlemcen, with a particular emphasis on its military architecture. By analyzing the descriptions provided by Al-Ya'qubi, Ibn Hawqal, and Al-Bakri, we can reconstruct a picture of Tlemcen fortifications and their significance.

2-1Military Architectural Aspects:

The most prominent architectural feature highlighted in the text is the city's fortifications, which were clearly a defining characteristic of Tlemcen during this period.

Multiple Walls: Al-Ya'qubi description of "a stone wall, and behind it another stone wall" indicates a sophisticated and robust defensive system. The presence of two concentric walls suggests a layered approach to security, providing multiple lines of defense against potential attacks. This double-walled structure would have significantly increased the city's resilience and the difficulty for any invading force. The material, stone, further emphasizes the strength and permanence of these fortifications.

Strong and Impregnable Brick Wall: Ibn Hawqal corroborates the existence of strong fortifications, specifying a "strong and impregnable brick wall". While differing in material from Al-Ya'qubi stone walls, brick was also a common and effective material for defensive structures in this era. The adjective "impregnable" underscores the perceived strength and effectiveness of these walls in deterring sieges.

Walled City with Gates: Al-Bakri provides further detail by describing Tlemcen as a "walled city" with five gates. Gates were crucial elements in the military architecture of a city. They controlled access, allowing for the regulation of entry and exit, and could be heavily fortified themselves with towers, drawbridges, and other defensive mechanisms. The specific mention of the number and locations of these gates (three on the Qibla side, one in the east, and one in the west) offers a glimpse into the city's layout and potential strategic considerations for defense and movement.

2-2 Other Architectural and Urban Details:

While the military aspect is central, the texts also offer glimpses into other architectural and urban features that indirectly relate to the city's strength and prosperity:

Palaces and Well-Built Houses: Al-Ya'qubi mentions "palaces, and well-built houses". This suggests a degree of urban development and a settled, potentially prosperous population, which could contribute to the city's ability to maintain its defenses.

Flowing Rivers and Watermills: Ibn Hawqal notes "flowing rivers, watermills along them, and fruits". The

presence of reliable water sources and agricultural productivity would have been vital for sustaining the city's population, especially during times of siege. Watermills indicate technological sophistication and the ability to process resources efficiently.

Irrigated Crops and Abundant Yields: Ibn Hawqal's mention of "irrigated crops, abundant yields, and farmlands" further reinforces the idea of a self-sufficient and potentially well-provisioned city, a crucial factor in withstanding prolonged military engagements.

The geographical sources from the 2nd to 5th centuries AH paint a picture of Tlemcen as a well-fortified urban center. The descriptions by Al-Ya'qubi, Ibn Hawqal, and Al-Bakri collectively highlight the presence of robust defensive structures, including multiple stone or brick walls and strategically placed gates. These features underscore the military importance of Tlemcen during this period.

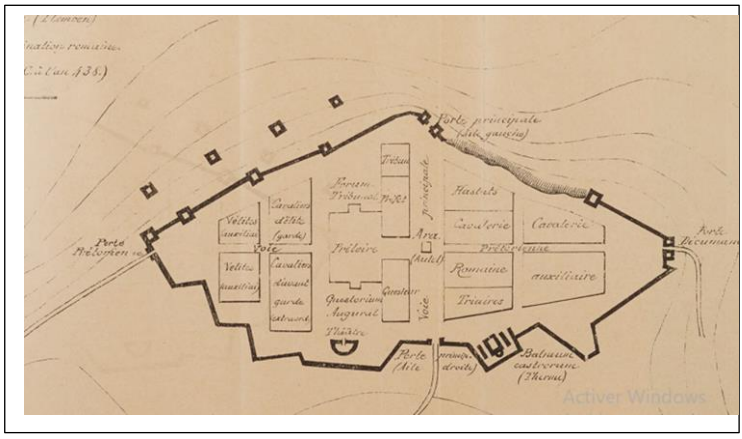
Furthermore, the mentions of palaces, well-built houses, water resources, and agricultural abundance suggest a city capable of supporting its population and maintaining its defenses. This architectural analysis confirms that military considerations were a significant factor in the urban planning and development of Tlemcen during the 6th to 11th centuries AD, This period coincides with the beginning of the Idrisid Dynasty and the end of the Almoravid period.

The city of Agadir through French studies and archaeological research:

There have been numerous studies on the city of Agadir, and we will attempt to present a general summary of the most significant ones. These studies span various disciplines, including history, archaeology, urban planning, and sociology. We begin with the article by CANAL (J.), Contribution à l'histoire de Tlemcen. Pomaria, Tlemcen sous la domination romaine, which discusses the city during ancient times when it was known as Pomaria. In his research, Canal conducted detailed studies of the Latin inscriptions discovered among the city's ruins and also provided an

approximate reconstruction of the city's layout during the ancient period. This approach, combining textual analysis and spatial reconstruction, is one of the many methodologies employed in the broader study of Agadir ((J.), 1889, pp. 257-299).

Professor Alfred Bel also conducted excavations in the city, which revealed important archaeological remains dating back to the Islamic period, the most significant of which is the bathhouse rooms located near the minaret (Alfred, 1913, pp. 27-47).



Plan No. 02 illustrates the remains of the Roman city. ((J.), 1889)

Furthermore, Abdelrrahman Khelifa conducted archaeological excavations at the site, which revealed to us the remains of a mosque, where he made a preliminary historical attempt represented in the following text speak of an Idrisid masjid, this marks, in the authors' minds, more of a political break, since the Idrisids put an end to the Kharijite revolution. Consequently, these authors would consider Idris I and his son Idris II as the founders of the masjid of Agadir.

However, historically, before the advent of the Idrisids, this region experienced the period of the Fath (conquest), the period of the governors, and the Kharijite period. Each of these earlier periods could have been the time of the first foundation of a cultural establishment that might have used

the same location as the masjid al-'atiq (the old mosque)! We will therefore refrain, until proven otherwise, from speaking of an Idrisid masjid.

What are the dating elements that we possess at the end of these first two campaigns?

In soundings 2 and 3, it seems we reached the virgin soil above the floor of the masjid in sounding 2. In sounding 3, by making a cut into the floor of the masjid, we uncovered rubble structures that led us to issue two hypotheses:

Could these rubble stones be a foundation offset?

Or, what is more probable, given the reused materials for the construction of the masjid, we could be in the presence, below the level of the masjid, of an earlier level, which could be from an earlier Muslim period, or even from the Roman period? (Dahmani, 1974, pp. 244-260).

Ibn Khaldun presented a complete text regarding the construction of this city, in which the following was stated: (When Idris the Elder ibn Abdullah ibn al-Hasan reached the Far Maghreb and seized it, he advanced to the Middle Maghreb in the year one hundred and seventy-four [AH, roughly 790-791 AD]. Muhammad ibn Khazar ibn Sawlat, the emir of Zenata and Tlemcen, met him and entered his obedience. He incited Maghrawa and Bani Ifran against Tlemcen and enabled him to take possession of it. So, he conquered it, laid out its mosque, ascended its minbar, resided there for months, and then returned to the Maghreb. Following him from the East came his brother Sulayman ibn Abdullah, who settled there and was appointed by him as its governor...) (Khaldun, 1981, p. 102).

Based on what has been mentioned, we can infer that the city of Agadir was built on the ruins of a Roman city that was called Pomaria, where the Idrisids used building materials that were employed during the Roman period.

3-A Descriptive Analysis of the Military Fortifications of the City of Agadir:

The city of Agadir still preserves some military structures scattered throughout its surroundings, including walls, towers, and gates. In this study, we will describe the most significant of these fortifications.

3-1 Remnants of the walls : are scattered in the northern and southeastern parts of the city. By analyzing archival maps and comparing them with field data, it is clear that the northern facade of the city was well fortified with multiple layers of walls. This was undoubtedly a result of the historical development of the city. The first walls were built close to residential areas, with some buildings located close to them initial fortifications not much remains of these initial walls. However, the second set of walls, extending from Ghmeis Tower to a vaulted passage, stretches approximately 350 meters. These walls were built using rammed earth (tabia) and were reinforced with a main tower, represented by Ghmeis Tower, which is located at the northernmost edge, just below the mosque.



Image No. 01 shows the remains of the walls before restoration (YACINE, 2015-2016)



Image No. 02 shows the remains of Ghmeis Tower before restoration work, (YACINE, 2015-2016)

The city also preserves remnants of walls scattered across different areas. Some sections have had houses built over them, while others remain partially intact. This particularly applies to the northern part of the city.

On the southeastern side, there is a single wall approximately 235 meters long, built using rammed earth (tabia). This wall is interspersed with several towers and follows the site's topography. Fieldwork observations reveal that there are passageways along the upper part of these walls, connecting the towers to one another.

This pertains to the remains of the walls, which were undoubtedly built to follow the topographical pattern of the city. Many of these remains were destroyed due to the urban expansion that occurred during the French period and after independence. From these remnants, it is clear that rammed earth (tabia) was the primary material used in construction, with bricks and stones also being employed in some sections.



Image No. 03 shows the remains of passageways located in the southeastern walls by the author.



Image No. 04 shows the remains of the walls on the southeastern side by the author.

As for the towers, some of the finest examples are spread throughout the city. The first type of tower is located separately from the walls, in the center of the city. It is a residential tower consisting of two floors, built using Roman stones that were sourced from the site. Unfortunately, this tower has suffered from alterations, as one of the residents covered it with cement. Fortunately, there are some images of the tower before these modifications took place.

The second type is represented by the Khmis Tower, which is one of the largest towers. It has a rectangular layout and was built using a natural cave, which was then reinforced with tabia walls. This tower became one of the most important defensive structures in the city of Agadir.

The third type of tower is found in the southeastern area of the city. These towers are integrated into the walls and consist of two floors, with semi-cylindrical vaults separating the two levels. Often, these towers contain rooms that were used for surveillance purposes, The fourth type is represented by the defensive tower, which is protected by a surrounding wall. This is known as the Sultan's Tower, located in the southeastern part of the Agadir Mosque. It is one of the oldest defensive structures in the city. Although it has a simple design, what distinguishes it is the wall that surrounds it, adding an extra layer of protection.



The images show the remains of the first type of tower (Chihab, 2019)



Image No 05 shows the remains of Ghmeis by the author.

Image No. 06 shows the remains of the Sultan's Tower by the author.





Image No. 07 shows the remains of the third type of tower by the author.

Doors: the city of Agadir still retains the archaeological remains of Four doors, which we find as follows:

Bab al-Aqaba: This gate was previously mentioned in geographical sources dating back to the beginning of the 5th century AH / 11th century AD. Unfortunately, it was destroyed during urban development work in the city.

However, archival photographs still preserve its image, We find that the entrance was built on the northeastern side of the city of Agadir, located a few meters from the old mosque. Roman stones and irregularly shaped stones were used in its construction, in addition to brick and tabia (rammed earth). The entrance is characterized by a pointed horseshoe arch devoid of any ornamentation. It is considered one of the direct entrances, as it was protected by one or two towers.



Image No 08 shows Bab al-Aqaba before the demolition process, (LÉOPOLD, 1853 A 1864)

Bab al-Hammam: This entrance is located on the eastern side of the city of Agadir, near the Sultan's Tower and Wadi Mechkana. It features a simple design, with access through a doorway topped by a semicircular arch. This entrance is

considered one of the indirect entrances, as it contains two bends.

Bab ar-Rwah: This entrance is located on the northwestern side of the city of Agadir. From its appearance and size, it is clear that it was a secondary entrance. It features a simple design with a semicircular arch and was built using tabia (rammed earth) and brick.



Image number 09 shows Bab al-Hammam before restoration (YACINE, 2015-2016)



Image number 10 shows Bab Rwah before restoration (YACINE, 2015-2016)

Bab al-Khoukha, based on our site visit and relying on the text of Georges Marçais (Marçais, 2011, p. 17), who describes it as a vaulted passage, is likely the same Bab al-Khoukha mentioned by Al-Bakri.

This passage consists of two halls, the first of which leads to Bab al-Rawah through an arched entrance with two slightly pointed semicircular arches, built with regularly shaped stones.



Image No 11 shows the remains of the vaulted passageway by the author.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, our study of the historical development of Agadir in Tlemcen reveals a fascinating trajectory of urban evolution across different ruling dynasties. While the Idrisids appear to have focused primarily on the restoration of existing ancient walls, the Almoravid period marked a significant phase of growth and expansion. This is evidenced by the remnants of Bab al-Aqaba and the vaulted passageway unearthed during recent restoration efforts, indicating substantial construction beyond mere repairs.

The Almohad era witnessed a further strategic consolidation, with the existing walls being reinforced and a new encompassing wall erected to integrate Agadir and Tagrart. This suggests a period of increased urban planning and territorial cohesion. Finally, the Zayyanid presence is discernible through the wall structures located in the southeastern part of the city, particularly around the Sultan's Tower. These remnants offer tangible proof of their

contribution to the city's fortifications and continued strategic importance.

By examining these surviving architectural elements, we gain valuable insights into the changing priorities and urban development strategies employed by each successive dynasty, painting a vivid picture of Agadir's historical journey within the broader context of the region.

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